



206 of 250 DOCUMENTS

Copyright 1998 The Baltimore Sun Company
The Baltimore Sun

December 21, 1998, Monday, FINAL EDITION

SECTION: TELEGRAPH (NEWS), Pg. 1A

LENGTH: 1734 words

HEADLINE: College Park president seems right at home; Leadership: The campus's newest administrator is winning accolades as he settles in at the state's flagship public university.

BYLINE: Michael Hill, SUN STAFF

BODY:

COLLEGE PARK -- Dan Mote has been in Maryland less than four months, but he talks like a native about his new school.

"This is the oldest building on campus," the president of the University of Maryland, College Park said of Rossborough Inn. "The sign says 1804, but it's really older than that. It's 12 miles out of Washington. Apparently there would be an inn about every 12 miles along the main roads, half a day's journey. Washington slept here, Lafayette."

Such attention to detail combined with a friendly, relaxed manner is winning Clayton Daniel Mote Jr. accolades as he takes over the state's flagship public university.

"I get very good vibrations," Sidney L. Gulick, a mathematics professor who chairs the College Park Senate, said of Mote. "Generally speaking, I'm very pleased with what I've seen. His honeymoon isn't over."

Mote -- who started Sept. 1 after the resignation of longtime President William E. "Brit" Kirwan to take the presidency of Ohio State University -- has been given the task of raising the College Park campus to the next level, so that the mention of the University of Maryland will conjure up the same positive images that comes with names such as North Carolina, Virginia and Michigan.

He brings his quick smile and self-effacing laugh to College Park after a career at another of those outstanding public institutions -- the University of California at Berkeley.

"He's used to playing in the big arena," said history professor Ira Berlin. "That's the arena we want to play in."

A recent day for the 61-year-old Mote began with an 8 a.m. breakfast with the executive committee of the campus Senate, about a dozen members of the school's top advisory body of faculty, staff and students. UM work would consume almost every minute of the next 16 hours.

College Park president seems right at home; Leadership: The campus's newest administrator is winning accolades as he settles in at the state's flagship public university. The Baltimore Sun D

He would spend time with his staff going over various speeches and details of his tasks for this month's commencement. He would meet with two of the Berkeley engineering doctoral students he advises, touring laboratory space at the College Park engineering building that will allow them to work on this campus.

He would drive to Annapolis for a meeting of the task force examining the structure of the state's public higher education system. Back in College Park, he would meet with his two graduate students to go over their work, then attend a night meeting with a firefighters group that has a training facility on the campus. The day would end in the small hours at his campus home, writing a speech to give to a legislative group the next day.

"I don't mind it," he said of the hours. "I like it. It comes with the job."

His work is getting good reviews.

"He has a very down-to-earth way of talking," said Gulick, who has been on the faculty since 1965. "He's got a lot to learn, but he is not afraid to say when he doesn't know something."

Gregory L. Geoffrey came from Penn State University as provost 18 months ago and was understandably concerned about the rather sudden change at the top.

"I am delighted to find that we share the same values and aspirations for the university," Geoffrey said. "He is committed to building a very high-quality academic institution here."

Geoffrey commended Mote's style. "What I like in him is his willingness to openly discuss issues, to throw ideas out on the table and see how people react to them."

The president's office suite in the administration building at the east end of the campus' main quadrangle has the appropriate mix of pomp and busyness. In the midst of the wood paneling and the scurrying staff, two young men stand out.

They are the graduate engineering students in for a few days from Berkeley. Two of about 10 students who still work under Mote (he says he plans to take on a group at Maryland), they are the only people in the office who call the university president Dan.

"He's great," said Arvin Ramind, whose research is on one of Mote's specialties, discs that spin at very high speeds, such as saw blades. "He's more like a friend than your professor."

The other graduate student, Irving Scher, works in Mote's other specialty -- skiing. As Mote tells the story, in 1968 a graduate student approached him with the idea of figuring out why skis turn -- what is actually happening to the ski and the snow as a skier carves a turn.

"I told him we couldn't do that because people wouldn't take your work seriously if you work on things that are fun. You are supposed to work on things that are not fun," said Mote, an avid skier, sailor and mountain climber.

"He came back and challenged me, saying, 'Wouldn't you learn something about how things work, how you can make something work better, and isn't this what research is all about?'"

"Then he said the real reason I didn't want to work on skiing was not because it wasn't important, but because I was listening to other people who were telling me not to do it. He said if that was the case, I might as well get a job in industry where there are plenty of people to tell you what do."

"Well, at that I capitulated immediately," Mote said.

That graduate student, Robert Piziali, went on to get his doctorate and join the faculty at Stanford University.

College Park president seems right at home; Leadership: The campus's newest administrator is winning accolades as he settles in at the state's flagship public university. The Baltimore Sun D

"The University of Maryland is very lucky, I tell you," said Piziali, 56, who runs his own firm in California. "For one, he works harder than almost anyone I ever came across.

"And the way he goes about his work is so important. He will identify a task, how it should be done, get the people together to do it and get the resources. Then he will follow through. He is very complete."

Mote could have taken another lesson from his skiing. In his office is a picture of him in mid-fall, coming out of the bindings of skis, his backpack full of telemetry devices transmitting data from the skis, the bindings and various parts of his legs. In this type of research, you learn something from falling and from apparently failing.

"I'm saddened by the burden of always getting straight A's," said Mote, knowing he was referring to people exactly like himself and most of his faculty. "That usually means you just do what you are told very well. And you don't make real progress by just doing what you are told. You don't think outside the box. It can be very limiting getting straight A's, doing things that just satisfy other people."

The work with skis -- falls and all -- led to standards for bindings that have significantly reduced injuries. As for figuring out why a ski turns, Mote said that though they have worked on it from the days when Jean-Claude Killy was testing skis for them, that question still is not answered.

Sporting goods manufacturer Adidas-Saloman AG "designs its skis using our work," Mote said, though he gets no money, only research support, out of it.

Piziali pointed out that many people have made money off Mote's work.

"Take the saw blades," he said. "If you are a pencil manufacturer working with very thin blades and you get one even thinner so that out of a block of wood that gave you 10 pencils you can now get 11, you've decreased your need for raw materials by 10 percent with no increase in cost.

"That means a lot of money. But Dan was content if people supported his research. He wanted to keep the academic work separate from the commercial application so people would know he was doing it for the right reasons."

Money is indelibly connected with Mote's name because of his success at fund raising, his main job in the Berkeley administration. He is expected to bring the same success to College Park, where public funds are shrinking as a percentage of the budget.

"I had some strong ideas about how you should go about raising money," he said of the reason he moved to the administration when his fellow mechanical engineer, Chang-Lin Tien, became the school's chancellor in 1991.

"Traditional fund-raisers could deal with donors but lacked the academic vision," Tien said at his Berkeley office. "I felt that the fund raising had to be subordinate to the overall vision for the university. Combined with his organizational skills and his personality, that's what Dan Mote brought to the job."

Essentially, Mote moved fund raising from a sideline task of an anonymous development office to a central role at the school, something that involved all faculty. He has begun to make similar moves at College Park, naming engineering Dean William W. Destler to the recently vacated post of vice president for school advancement, its top fund-raiser, on an acting basis.

Though Destler emphasizes that the job is only for six months, Mote clearly hopes that his fellow engineer will find fund raising as appealing as he did.

"He's a very skilled fund-raiser who has strong views of how fund raising should be conducted," Destler said of Mote. "He's a very task-oriented person. It's quite clear he's already having an impact on the administration here."

College Park president seems right at home; Leadership: The campus's newest administrator is winning accolades as he settles in at the state's flagship public university. The Baltimore Sun D

Mote was considered for the chancellor's position at Berkeley when Tien quit two years ago. "They chose someone from outside the system," Mote said, making clear he would have loved to have gotten that job. "That's fine, I understand why they did."

Mote was born and raised not far from Berkeley and got his undergraduate and graduate degrees there. After a year in England and three years at Carnegie Tech in Pittsburgh, he returned to Berkeley in 1967 and, other than sabbaticals in Europe and sailing in the South Pacific, stayed there until he came to College Park. He could easily have served out his career there after not getting the chancellor's post, but instead went after a president's position at his old school in Pittsburgh, now Carnegie-Mellon University.

"You reach an age when you realize if you are going to do something else, you had better do it," he said. "You don't have that much time."

Mote did not get the presidency of Carnegie-Mellon, but then he won the College Park post -- "a much better job," he said.

So he and his wife, Patsy, who have two children and four grandchildren in the San Francisco area, picked up and moved across the country -- with no regrets, he says.

"Of course we miss our home and our friends," he said. "This is the type of job where you don't really make friends. But this is exactly what we want to do."

"I can't complain at all about my life. It's really worked out wonderfully."

Pub Date: 12/21/98

GRAPHIC: COLOR PHOTO, ANDRE F. CHUNG, Playing in "big arena": University of Maryland, College Park President C. D. "Dan" Mote Jr. is expected to bring fund-raising success to the campus.; **PHOTO, ANDRE F. CHUNG :** SUN STAFF, Meeting: C. D. "Dan" Mote Jr., president of the University of Maryland, College Park, chats with Marie Smith Davidson, chief of staff, in his office.

LOAD-DATE: December 22, 1998